

De-escalation Techniques & Strategies

De-escalation techniques are intervention strategies frequently used to prevent a person from emotionally escalating from feelings of frustration or irritation. Effective de-escalation strategies can help reduce the level of stress and frustration that a person is experiencing and lead to meaningful conversation about the source of the stress.

Strategy	Notes	Examples
Focus on managing your own emotional response	When someone is talking to you in a heated way, it is easy to escalate yourself. Try to stay calm and positive.	
Take a deep breath	One way to do that is to take a few deep breaths. When stressed, our breathing often becomes shallow and rapid. This increases agitation.	
Listen more than you talk to allow the person to vent	Sometimes in these situations, all the person needs is to vent and get it all out. Listening can be just what they need. Always remember, you do not need to listen if someone is being disrespectful to you.	
Show empathy	Sympathy means feeling sorry for the person. Empathy means that you respect their experience (even if you don't agree with it).	
Identify and define the problem	When a person is escalated and frustrated, it is often hard for them to stay on point. When they calm down, try to relay the problem back to them in a succinct way.	

Try not to take it personally	If the person is raising their voice and sounding agitated, remember they are unlikely to be upset with you as a person, but are upset about a situation.	
Avoid the need to be right or fix it right away	Advice and suggestions should come after listening, understanding, and clarifying. Don't interrupt a frustrated person with your ideas or experience.	
Take a break	If things do not seem to be calming down, you may decide to ask the person to take a break, take a walk, or rest, and then reconnect.	
If meeting in-person, be aware of your body language and vary your distance apart, as appropriate	Avoid crossing your arms, clenching your fists, or throwing your hands up in frustration. Be certain you are on the same physical level - don't stand if they are sitting. For instance: Creating some extra physical space can be helpful. Lean or step back.	
Use positive language when ending the interaction	Relay back any solutions or positive statements that were made to end on a positive note, if possible.	



The MassGrown Wellness program is designed and developed to address the specific mental health and wellness needs of the Massachusetts agriculture community and its supporters. Web-based resources, online and in-person peer-based training and outreach to the Massachusetts' agricultural community are provided free of charge to all Massachusetts farmers and those that support them. Learn more at www.mass.gov/massgrownwellness.



This de-escalation strategies suggestion chart was developed by Farm First. Farm First is a public, not-for-profit program jointly sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture and the Vermont Agency of Human Services' Invest EAP Centers for Wellbeing. Farm First is a public program formed to provide farmers and their families with support, resources, and information to reduce stress. Farm First is not a technical assistance organization but can help connect Vermont farmers to such resources. Learn more at www.farmfirst.org.